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ABSTRACT

Based on the current drive toward professionalism in early childhood education and the low status and prestige afforded teachers in this field, this paper applies some of the main concepts of professionalism to the current state of the art of early childhood education. Two uses of the term "professional" are delineated: the "folk" concept and the scientific concept. The first use is explained in terms of an honorific designation, and early childhood practitioners are not seen in the public mind to have achieved the goals implicit in this concept. In the scientific conceptions of the term "profession," eight criteria must be met: social necessity, altruism, autonomy, code of ethics, distance from client, standards of practice, prolonged training, and specialized knowledge. The current status of different aspects of early childhood education is then assessed in relation to meeting these individual criteria. In a closing section, the work of several contemporary developmental researchers is cited as rich in implications for principles of education in the early years. Finally, the difficulty that the field of early childhood education experiences in producing reliable and persuasive empirical evidence for the activities of its practitioners is discussed. (DST)

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The Nature of Professions:

Where Is Early Childhood Education?

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The purpose of this paper is to apply some of the main features of the concept of a profession to the current state of the art of early childhood education. However, before launching into the discussion, I would like to indicate some of the bases for my interest in this topic.

There is at present a strong drive toward the professionalization of school teaching in general and teaching and working in preschool settings in particular. With respect to the latter, the Illinois Association for the Education of Young Children has established the Illinois Society of Early Childhood Professionals, an organization open only to specially qualified members of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). The Illinois society is expected to be a model for adoption by other state groups interested in strengthening professionalism among early childhood educators and child care workers.

The mounting pressure to identify and acknowledge early childhood "professionals" is in part due to grave concerns over the very low pay, status, and prestige of those who work in preschool settings. Indeed, the theme of the 1985 annual conference of NAEYC was "Early Childhood Education: A Proud Profession!" But this theme might be seen as a case of protesting too much. While early childhood workers may not be members of an "ashamed" profession, considering its

public image, financial status, and intellectual standing (Silin, 1985), it can hardly be described as a "proud" one.

Another basis for my interest in the status of the early childhood practitioner is the assumption that we cannot have optimum environments for children unless the environments are also optimum for the adults who work with them. For several years, taking this assumption as virtually axiomatic, I have tried to describe the factors required to create optimum environments for teachers of young children (cf. Katz, 1977). By focusing on the needs of teachers, I do not intend in any way to diminish the centrality of parents' roles in their children's welfare and development. On the contrary, it seems to me that it is in the best interests of parents to be concerned about the qualities, status, and working conditions of their children's teachers and caregivers.

In other words, improving the lot of teachers is in no way antithetical to the interests of parents. Indeed, there is persuasive evidence that young children are very sensitive to the moods, emotional states, and morale of the adults around them (Cummings, Iannotti, & Zahn-Waxler, 1985). Thus, it seems useful to illuminate issues relating to those factors affecting the status and morale of teachers of young children. However, we must acknowledge that much of what is required to upgrade the conditions and wages of

practitioners would place a heavy burden upon precisely that portion of the population that can least afford to accept it.

WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A PROFESSION?

Early in this century, scholars began analyzing the nature of professions. Analyses continue apace today as more and more occupational groups strive to upgrade themselves to professional status (Forsyth & Danisiewicz, 1983; Goode, 1983). Many definitions of the term "professional" appear in the literature. While I have attempted to synthesize these various definitions, for the purpose of this discussion I am drawing most heavily on the work of H. S. Becker (1962) in his classic paper "The Nature of a Profession."

Becker distinguishes between two uses of the term "professional": the scientific concept and the "folk" concept. The former refers to the way social scientists use the term, and the latter corresponds to meanings given to the term in everyday language.

Popular uses of the term "profession"

According to Becker (1962), the folk conception of a profession is evaluative in that it is used as an honorific designation. In popular use, the term denotes a quality of spirit, an exceptional level of dedication to morally

praisewortny work. It is also associated with high social status and is often assumed to be correlated with a high income. As is apparent from the realities of the field of early childhood education, much of the drive toward professionalization is based on popular rather than scientific connotations of the term.

With respect to achieving the goals implicit in the popular conception of professionalism, early childhood practitioners do not seem to be doing very well. It is my impression from extensive experience with colleagues in many parts of the world that the younger the child with whom the practitioner works, the less trainining is required, the less ability is expected, the lower the pay, the fewer the working benefits, and the poorer the working conditions.

While it may seem to us that our moral praiseworthiness should be obvious to all, acknowledgment of this fact is not widespread. I think this situation is due in part to the possibility that, in many countries, people really believe that young children should be at home with their mothers enjoying what is sometimes referred to as a "Norman Rockwellian" version of family life. While the fact that young children participate in various kinds of preschool settings is not to be blamed on the workers who staff them, many laypersons believe that the work involved in caring for

children is no more than minding babies whose mothers are otherwise engaged.

We ourselves have consistently and strongly asserted that young children learn through play. It is perhaps not surprising, then, to find policy makers and others suggesting that children might just as well be left to play at home or on the neighborhood playground. Such critics frequently assert that such learning experiences do not require the provision of highly trained personnel, specialized buildings, or equipment. However, contemporary research and scholarship concerning the role and effects of play on various aspects of development shows play to be a very complex phenomenon (cf. Brown & Gottfried, 1985; Carpenter, 1983). We must be careful to indicate that some play experiences are more beneficial than others and to stress that adults have a major role in maximizing the benefits children may derive from them.

As to our status, good reason exists to believe that, as the proportion of women in an occupation increases, its status decreases (Wolfle, 1978). As if that were not enough, there is also evidence that the status of a practitioner is correlated with the status of the client. If this is indeed the case, then teachers and nannies who work with the offspring of high status and high income families may enjoy greater status than those who work with the children of

inner-city poor or unemployed parents. Such status diffusion, applicable to many fields of work, is unlikely to be altered much by the present drive toward professionalization.

Scientific definitions of the term "profession"

Most scholars of the subject agree that eight criteria must be met before a field of endeavor may be termed a profession. In the absence of a formal or conceptual rationale for ordering the importance of these criteria, I shall introduce them in order of those to be treated most briefly first and most fully last.

Social Necessity

Most scholars include as a criterion of a profession that its work be essential to the functioning of a society, suggesting that the absence of its knowledge and techniques would weaken the society in some way.

The evidence bearing on whether or not the work of early childhood educators is essential to society is mixed at best. While recent reports of the longitudinal effects of early childhood education (Consortium for Longitudinal Studies, 1984) are very encouraging, they are in need of large scale replication. We still have a long way to go to make a convincing case that teachers of the highest quality

can provide services to young children without which society is at risk.

Given the power of experiences in later childhood and adolescence to offset the benefits of good early experiences, we must be very careful in the statements we make about what we can achieve. We can be no more sure that the effects of good early experiences cannot be reversed than that early bad experiences can be remediated. Haskins' (1985) recent report of a long term follow-up study of primary school children who had been in day care has indicated that such children are more aggressive in their primary school years than children not in day care and that those who had been in "cognitive" programs were more aggressive than those in other types of settings. Since we do not know what Haskins meant by "cognitive," these results are highly susceptible to misinterpretation and abuse by policy makers. Nor is it likely that any of the subjects in his study were in programs of the quality to which most of us are committed.

Altruism

The mission of a profession is said to be altruistic in that it is service-oriented rather than profit-oriented. Professionals are said to have clients rather than customers or consumers. Ideally, professionals are expected to perform

their services with unselfish dedication, if necessary working beyond normal hours and giving up personal comforts in the interests of society. Professions identify the goals of their work with the good of humanity at large, placing strong emphasis on social ends in contrast to the more tangible or immediate ends served by tradespersons, merchants, or entertainers.

On this criterion, we ought to be doing very well. No one can claim that teachers of young children are busy amassing riches or engaged in work that is simply easy or glamorous! The service ideal and client-centeredness of professions seems clearly characteristic of teaching in general and early childhood teaching in particular.

Autonomy

Most scholars in the sociology of professions agree that, ideally, a profession is an occupation that is autonomous in at least two ways (Forsyth & Danisiewicz, 1983). The client is autonomous in that he or she does not dictate to the practitioner what services are to be rendered or how they are to be received. Ideally, professionals who practice in large organizations or institutions are also autonomous with respect to their employer, who does not dictate the nature of practice but hires the professional to exercise judgment based on specialized knowledge, principles, and techniques.

As Brauge (cited in Forsyth & Danisiewicz, 1983) points out, "To the degree that a worker is constrained in the performance of his work by the controls and demands of others, that individual is less professional."

Issues concerning autonomy with respect to clients are complex for the early childhood educator. Our profession has at least three client groups: parents, children, and the larger society or posterity. All of us are challenged by the paradoxical situation of wanting to strengthen and increase parent involvement in children's education while at the same time wishing to exercise our best professional judgment as to what is in children's best interests. We still have much to learn about how to be more sensitive to parents without being intimidated by them. To laypersons, parent involvement seems so simple that our apparent resistance to it is difficult to understand. A large part of the parent involvement problem is that parents are not a monolithic aggregate. Understandably, parents do not all agree on what goals and methods are appropriate for early childhood education. Let us hope that we work in a country that prizes diversity of views, values, opinions, and cultures among the parents of the children we teach. However, the more diverse the client group, the less likely it is that all the parents of any one teacher's pupils will be equally satisfied. To which of the parents is the teacher to accede? All of them?

The one with the loudest voice? The highest status? In the United States, schools have always been responsive to parents--but not to all parents . . . just to the one or two who have power and status in the community. To develop as a profession requires that we learn how to respond on the basis of our very best professional judgment, based on the best available knowledge and practices, to desires that are sometimes strident and often contradictory.

Although parents and society at large are served by our profession, most teachers think of children as their primary clients. A possible pitfall exists in this narrow view of the client group. Specifically, every "school of thought," educational method, or approach in part argues its merits on the basis that "the children love it." Maybe so. But the fact that children "love" an activity is not sufficient justification for its inclusion in the curriculum. Children love candy, junk food, silly cartoons, and what many of us consider inappropriate television programs. Although children's preferences must be taken into consideration, decisions concerning curriculum should not be made solely on the basis of the enjoyment of one client group. Enjoyment, in and of itself, is not an appropriate goal for education. The appropriate goal for education--at every level--is to engage the learner's mind and to assist that mind in its efforts to make better and deeper sense of significant

experiences. I should add here that, when teachers accomplish this end, most children find their education enjoyable. In other words, enjoyment is a by-product rather than a goal of good teaching.

In a sense, society or posterity is the educator's ultimate client. But societies like ours often demand incompatible achievements. They want the young to learn to be both cooperative and competitive. They want conformity and initiative. It is no simple matter to help children learn where and when such different dispositions are appropriate. Our communities say that, at the least, they want excellence, high standards of achievement, and equality of opportunity. What principles of learning, development, curriculum, evaluation, and testing can we apply to meet such multiple and often contradictory expectations (cf. Green, 1983)?

Code of Ethics

Consistent with client-centeredness, professional societies subscribe to a code of ethics intended to protect the best interests of clients and to minimize yielding to the temptations inherent in the practice of the profession. In addition, professional societies institute procedures for disciplining members in cases of violations of the code of ethics.

The development of a code of ethics for early childhood educators is not an easy task. The process involves identifying the major temptations confronted in the course of practice (Katz, 1984c). The code should address ethical dilemmas inherent in relations with children, parents, colleagues, employers, and the general lay public. Many people are skeptical about the usefulness of such codes. However, it seems to me that the ethical norms of a group of colleagues, articulated in a code of ethics, can help to give individual members the feeling that colleagues will back them up when they have to take a risky but courageous stand on a controversial ethical issue. It is likely that, when we believe our fellow practitioners will take the same stands as ourselves or would censure us if we failed to live up to the code, our commitment to right action is strengthened.

The NAEYC has formed a special committee to work on the development of a code for its members. Several state branches of the association have already developed their own. Inasmuch as local values and cultural variations play a strong role in conceptions of ethical standards, it would seem wise for each country, region, or cultural unit to develop its own code.

Distance from Client

Since, by definition, the practice of a profession requires bringing to bear a body of knowledge and principles to the solution of problems and predicaments, the relationship between practitioner and client is marked by optimum emotional distance, disinterest, or "detached concern" (Katz, 1984a). This distance from the client is reflected in the strong taboo against physicians treating members of their own families; in such situations, it is felt that emotional attachment and empathy might interfere with the exercise of reasoned judgment. This feature of professional practice does not preclude such feelings as empathy or compassion but is intended to place these feelings in appropriate perspective. Emphasis on such optimum distance is also expected to minimize the temptation to develop favorites among children and parents, and to inhibit the tendency to respond to clients in terms of personal predilection or impulses rather than on the basis of reasoned judgment.

I am aware that many specialists and teachers in early childhood education resist this aspect of professionalism--and not without reason. Among other things, they worry about meeting children's apparent need for closeness and affection. However, young children generally are capable of

experiencing such feelings even when the teacher maintains an optimum distance. Though effective teaching requires intimate knowledge of pupils, this can be achieved by frequent contact, observation, and listening without the kind of emotionality required of family relationships. In addition, many early childhood educators associate optimum distance with a stereotypical view of a remote, unresponsive, and intimidating expert who is likely to breed resentment among parents. In fact, optimum distance serves to protect the teacher from the risks of an emotional "burn-out" that can endanger functioning as well as undermine effectiveness with children. I want to emphasize that the emotional distance should be an optimum one in that it permits the teacher to be responsive, caring, and compassionate, as well as to exercise professional judgment and bring knowledge to bear on responses to children.

Standards of Practice

Most scholars also agree that a profession adopts standards of practice that are significant in three ways:

1. The profession adopts standards below which it is hoped no practitioner will fall. These standards are meant to insure that every practitioner applies the standard procedures in the course of exercising professional judgment. In some measure,

these standards result in standardization of professional performance (e.g., all physicians follow standard procedures in making diagnoses but exercise their own judgment in deciding what actions to take). In theory, at least, professional practice is distinguished from the work of artisans, tradespersons, technicians, or bureaucrats in that it does not simply implement fixed routines, rules of thumb, or regulations. Rather than following a set of recipes, the professional practitioner acts on the basis of accepted principles that are taken into account in the formulation of professional judgment.

2. The standards developed and adopted are addressed to the standard predicaments that every member can be expected to encounter fairly often in the course of practice. The standard procedures applied to the standard problems encountered in the course of practice are accumulated into the body of professional knowledge.

3. Another goal of a profession is that its standards of performance are universalistic rather than particularistic. Universalistic standards of performance imply that all the knowledge, skill, insight, ingenuity, etc. possessed by the

> practitioner is available to every client independent of such irrelevant personal attributes of the client as social and ethnic background, ability to pay, or personal appeal.

One of the major tasks ahead for us, as I see it, is to develop and articulate our perceptions of professional standards. One approach that we might consider is to enumerate and describe the standard predicaments that all early childhood educators confront in the course of their day-to-day work. One such effort of my own (Katz, 1984b), depicts a situation in which 4-year-olds quarrel over whose turn it is to use a tricycle. In this examination, the responses of a professionally trained teacher are compared with the responses of an untrained person in order to highlight how professional judgment comes into play.

A colleague and I are now working on a paper concerning standard predicaments teachers of young children may encounter in their work with parents (Katz & Becher, 1985). We have identified five types of predicaments: (a) differences between a parent and a teacher concerning pedagogical issues; (b) parents' expectations for their own children that might undermine the welfare of other children in the group; (c) parental hostility, anger, or denial of a teacher's competence; (d) a teacher's need to inform a parent that his or her child's development is not going well

and that special help is required; and (e) a teacher's perception that the parents' behavior puts the child's development at risk.

Our task is to suggest professionally appropriate responses for each of the five types of predicaments and to indicate what knowledge, principles, and professional techniques might be applied. Our hope is that this kind of effort will help in developing the body of knowledge, principles, and techniques that should underlie professional practice. Much more work needs to be done along these lines; such work requires identifying the predicaments considered most important and articulating our understanding of the knowledge and practices that can help in problem resolution.

Prolonged Training

Most scholars of the sociology of professions agree that a major defining attribute of a profession is that it requires entrants to undergo prolonged training. Although there are no standards by which to judge how long such training should be, the training process itself is thought to have several particular characteristics:

1. The training is specialized in order to ensure the acquisition of complex knowledge and techniques.

2. The training processes are difficult and require cognitive strain. As a consequence of careful screening, some candidates can be expected to fail. Training should be marked by optimum stress and sacrifice, resulting in dedication and commitment to the profession (Katz & Raths, 1986).

3. In all professions, candidates are required to master more knowledge than is likely to be applied and more than the student perceives to be necessary. In all professions, candidates complain about these excesses and the apparent irrelevance of much of the knowledge they are expected to master.

4. Insitutions responsible for professional training must be accredited or licensed by processes monitored by practicing members of the profession. These institutions award certificates, diplomas, or degrees under the supervision of members of the profession.

5. All professional training institutions offer trainees a common core of knowledge and techniques so that the entire membership of the profession shares a common allusionary base.

6. Professional societies and training institutions, very often in concert, provide systematic and regular continuing education for members.

It is not clear what kind and amount of training is required for high quality professional performance (see, for example, Katz, 1984b). In general, I think we should stop being defensive about expecting candidates in teacher education to study theory, research, history, and philosophy. My reasons for this stance include the point made above that all professions expose their candidates to more knowledge than they ever apply, expecting not more than about a third of what is mastered to be retained. (The more studied, the larger that third is.) Furthermore, evidence exists to show that, even though one forgets facts and concepts once mastered, such knowledge enables one to go on absorbing new facts and concepts more easily long after training has been completed (Broudy, 1983). In addition, I would like to suggest that there is a sense in which it is important for practitioners to be "literate" in their own fields: though they may never use Montessori's ideas, all early childhood practitioners should know who she was and should comprehend the main ideas she espoused.

In many countries, there is cause for concern about the characteristics of entrants into training. Too often, young women are advised to enter early childhood education because

their shyness makes them unsuitable for work with older pupils or because they are not academically strong enough to take up a more challenging or profitable occupation. Sadly, we have heard reports from several countries that preschool teachers have been urged to transfer into secondary teaching because they were judged "too good for infants."

Disheartening evidence exists to suggest that, among graduates of teacher education degree programs, those with the greatest ability last the shortest length of time in the teaching service (Schlecty & Vance, 1981). As more alternatives and attractive opportunities for women become available, this "brain drain" is likely to continue. It can only be stemmed if working conditions and pay scales are dramatically improved and if the needs of young children are given higher social priority. To some extent, the field of early childhood education--especially child care and day nursery work--is caught in a vicious cycle: People enter it with few skills, and no one wants to pay good wages for workers with few skills. Because the pay is low, the likelihood is that those with little training and few skills will take up the work. How can we break this cycle? While we must acknowledge that there are poor teachers at work, even among those with extensive training, good inservice education can help. But what may be required for a real break in the cycle is public understanding and recognition

of the potential benefits of high quality education in the early years and deeper public commitment to the welfare of young children.

It is not uncommon for laypersons to point out that they know of an outstanding teacher who has had no training. Perhaps all of us have encountered just such a gifted or "natural" teacher. This claim is, however, a dangerous one. Abraham Lincoln was a self-taught lawyer, but virtually everything about him was exceptional. Furthermore, there was a great deal less to be learned by lawyers in his time. The main point here is that a profession can never be designed on the basis of its exceptions. On the contrary, professional training is designed to provide all its practitioners with minimal standards to help them perform effectively. If all lawyers had Lincoln's remarkable qualities of mind and could teach themselves as thoroughly as he did, we might have no need for law schools.

Specialized Knowledge

Scholars seem to agree that a major defining attribute of a profession is that it is an occupation whose practices are based on specialized knowledge. This knowledge is thought to have several characteristics:

1. The knowledge is abstract rather than concrete (as in the case of crafts, sports, trades, or bureaucracies, in which the knowledge may consist of rules of thumb, rules, or regulations).

2. The knowledge consists of principles that are reasonably reliable generalizations to be considered in the course of practicing the profession. Some scholars insist that the knowledge underlying professional practice is organized into a systematic body of principles.

3. The knowledge and principles are relevant to practical rather than metaphysical or academic concerns. They are intended to rationalize the techniques of the profession and, as such, are oriented to some kind of practical and socially useful end.

4. The body of knowledge is esoteric or exclusive in that it is known only to practitioners of the profession and is unknown to laypersons. In this sense, the profession has a monopoly on most of its relevant knowledge and techniques.

5. Practitioners belong to professional societies that take responsibility for disseminating new knowledge relevant to practice by producing

scholarly journals and by providing conferences and workshops through which members are kept informed.

Can we identify the body of knowledge, specify the reliable principles, and develop a consensus as to the best available practices that will serve as a basis for professional practice in early childhood education? It is not clear what procedures are to be followed in finding answers to this question. We each might begin by listing those principles we consider essential and worthy of inclusion and then examine the list in a systematic way. To what extent would we agree on our lists? Finding answers to these questions is one of the biggest tasks ahead of us.

Some principles I wish to nominate for inclusion in our professional body of specialized knowledge are outlined very briefly below. These assertions are derived from my own understanding of what constitutes the best practice and my interpretation of the literature on children's learning and development.

1. Teaching strategies and curriculum decisions are best when they take into account both the potential value of immediate experiences and their long-term benefits. Teaching and curriculum practices that keep children busy and/or amused in the short term may or may not provide a solid

foundation for the long course of learning and development.

2. Young children's learning is optimized when children are engaged in interaction and in active rather than passive activities.

3. Many of the experiences or factors that influence development and learning are likely to be most beneficial when they occur in optimum rather than extreme amounts, intensities, or frequencies. In terms of teaching strategies, for example, the help, attention, or stimulation given can be both too little or too great for the development of a given individual's self-reliance. Likewise, the extent to which the curriculum includes routines can also be excessive or insufficient for the management of the life of a group of children.

4. The curriculum for young children is oriented toward helping them to make better sense of their own environment and experiences. As children grow, the concepts, ideas, and topics introduced are extended to include others' environments and experiences.

5. Many aspects of development and learning have the characteristic of a recursive cycle in that once a

child has a behavior pattern, the chances are that others will respond to him or her in such a way that the pattern will be strengthened. Thus, for example, a child who is unlikable is very likely to be responded to with rejection and to respond to rejection in such a way as to become more unlikable. A related principle of development is that a child cannot effect a change on his or her own; the adult must intervene to interrupt the recursive cycle.

6. The more informal the learning environment, the more access the teacher has to information about where the child is in terms of development and learning. The more informed the teacher is, the more likely he or she is to be able to make appropriate decisions about what teaching strategies to use and what curriculum activities to introduce. A related principle is that the life of the group is likely to be enhanced by optimum rather than maximium informality.

7. The three basic functions of language--communication, expression and reason--are acquired and strengthened through conversation rather than by passive exposure or systematic instruction.

8. Young children's development and learning are enhanced by a curriculum including activities and materials that provide them with content for conversation that is relevant, vivid, interesting, familiar, and/or significant to them.

9. Appropriate teaching strategies and curricula are those that take into account the acquisition of knowledge, skills and dispositions, especially the dispositions to go on learning and to apply the knowledge and skills acquired. Emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge and on practicing skills is excessive when it undermines such dispositions as curiosity, creativity, and other types of intrinsic motivation.

10. The younger children are, the greater the variety of teaching strategies and the greater the flexibility of the curriculum required. The use of a single pedagogical method or narrow range of curriculum materials and activities increases the likelihood that a significant proportion of children will experience feelings of incompetence.

Many more principles can be added to these ten, and I urge members of the early childhood community both as individuals

and as members of a professional society to develop and share more.

WHAT LIES AHEAD?

It seems to me that the research on development and learning currently being reported in the journals is much more applicable to pedagogical practice than it was when I first entered the field 20 years ago. In Britain, the work of such scholars as Clark (Clark & Wade, 1983), Wells (1983), Donaldson (1983), Dunn (Dunn & Dale, 1984), Karmiloff-Smith (1984), Rutter (Garmezy & Rutter, 1983) and many others is rich in implications for principles of education in the early years. In the United States, the list of scholars whose work supports the "informal," or intellectually rather than academically oriented, approach to early childhood education is also long. I commend the research of Brown (Brown & Campione, 1984), Nelson (Nelson & Seidman, 1984), Gottman (1983), Carpenter (1983), and Rogoff (1982), among many others. These investigators support the view that--with the help of very skilled, observant, attentive, reflective, and thoughtful adults--children construct their own understandings and sharpen their skills through interaction with their environment. In this sense, it seems to me that contemporary developmental researchers are painstakingly rediscovering the insights of John Dewey.

I recently came across a copy of D. E. M. Gardner's Testing Results in the Infant School, a book published in England in 1941 and not widely known among early childhood educators in the United States. I was surprised to find that Gardner begins by describing two contrasting types of infant schools. Although she refers to the two types as School A and School B, we would most likely refer to one as formal and academic and the other as informal or child-centered. These descriptions can be used almost verbatim to characterize contrasting early childhood education settings today in many parts of the world. The basic arguments Gardner makes about appropriate learning environments for young children still have to be made today. Although current research on children's intellectual development reaffirms Gardner's views of how children learn, we have yet to marshal the kind of compelling evidence we need to prove that the methods advocated by Gardner and Marianne Parry are more effective than others--particularly in the long term.

There are several reasons why we cannot produce the kind of persuasive empirical evidence we need. First, it is difficult to conduct longitudinal studies of young children and their teachers that would take into account the accepted canons of social science research. It seems as though the more rigorous the research design, the less relevant or valid the data, and vice versa. Second, to conduct

investigations that would satisfy standard scientific requirements would very likely be unethical: it is unethical to subject others to experiences one has reason to suspect may not be good for them for the sake of research--or for any other purpose.

Inevitably, then, we work in a field in which reliable data are difficult to obtain. In any field in which the database is slippery, the informational vacuum is filled by ideologies or doctrines (i.e., systems of beliefs that we hold most strongly about the things of which we are least certain). Thus, our commitment to particular approaches, even in the absence of compelling evidence that they are best or right, is in the nature of the field. However, the risks attendant upon such conditions are that we tend to reject counter-evidence and resist others' views. A professional code of ethics should remind us to keep an open mind, to look carefully at all the available evidence, to clearly identify our stands as being based respectively on evidence, on experience, and on ideology. Such reminders are among the important functions of professional societies. It may be that, when we are clear about the bases of our views, we shall be better able to increase public understanding of them and thereby gain their support in our efforts to improve provisions for young children.

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